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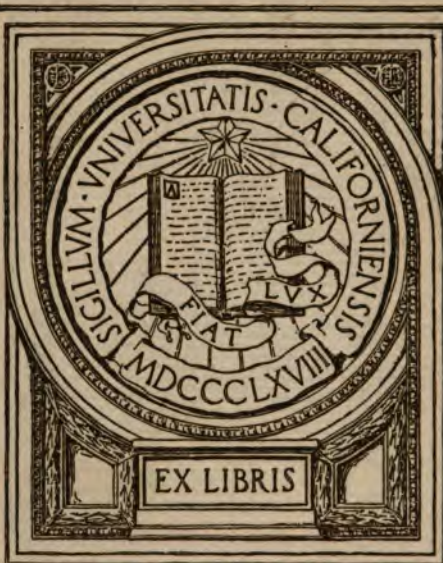
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HE SPIRIT OF A DISCIPLE

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THE SPIRIT OF A DISCIPLE

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BY

WILLIAM E. CADMUS

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THE SPIRIT OF A DISCIPLE

"Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

—MATTHEW 23:8

THESE words come from a chapter of contrasts; a chapter which shows the difference between profession and confession, between a gospel of formalism and a gospel of faith.

This chapter reveals more passion than any other address of Jesus. His feeling is so intense that it expresses itself in vituperation. He who charges his disciples to call no man "fool," calls the Pharisees "hypocrites, fools, blind, serpents, vipers, and the damned of hell." Such terms as these, in a calm nature like that of Jesus, signify unspeakable intensity of passion.

The reason is evident. He is dealing with his gospel's greatest enemy. This enemy was not the lust of the harlot; or the ignorance of the multitude, or the carnal weaknesses of sinful flesh. He was very tender in dealing with all these. They responded to treatment. But the self-satisfaction, the spiritual hardness, the pride of intellect, the flinty and unsympathetic spirit of the statute-bound Pharisee would not respond to treatment. It never has and it rarely will. It is dry rot and leaves the soul unfertile in spite of the sunshine of divine love and the rain of divine mercy.

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Jesus could do nothing with a set of disciples who would be influenced by the Pharisee. His denunciation of his truth's greatest enemy, and his constant reminder to his disciples to avoid the hidden rock of Phariseeism are very plain. He wishes to fit his disciples not to be monoliths of self-satisfaction, calling the world's attention to the inscription of their self-praised virtues, but to be servants of men, flexible, human, full of feeling, and progressive.

He therefore sets forth in the verse we have read the preëminent qualities of a disciple. They appear in three commands or assertions.

1. "Be not ye called Rabbi," a command to *simplicity*.

2. "For one is your Master, even Christ," a suggestion to *obedience*.

3. "And all ye are brethren," an assertion of *unity*.

In these three,—simplicity, obedience, unity,—we find the preëminent qualities of a disciple. Let us consider them in their order.

1. "Be not ye called Rabbi." A command to simplicity and humility. The Pharisees loved PLACE. They chose the uppermost seats at feasts. They were fond of names. They loved greetings in the market and to be called of men, "Rabbi," "Rabbi." It was a term of honor. It indicated intellectual superiority, dialectical subtlety, statutory wisdom. Therefore the Pharisee loved the name. He longed to be called pious, so he prayed ostentatiously in public

places. He longed to be thought *wise*, so he listened for the appellation Rabbi. He was not pious in reality. He was not wise in reality. He did not care. He was content with the form, even if he did not have the fact.

But Jesus did care. He wanted the substance, as well as the shadow. He wanted his disciples to cease being hypocrites, to be real inside, as well as outside. He was not contented with a mere name. Therefore he said, "Be not ye called Rabbi." It was only another way of saying, "My servants must be humble, simple; not grasping after titles, but seeking after truth."

In spite of this warning Christendom has confused the Master's work with names. How much of our sectarianism is but a division on names? And when in their bigotry the church confounded Orthodoxy and Christian, claiming no man was a Christian who denied its creed, again we see the Pharisee, loving to be called "Rabbi," and because he was clothed with brutal power, martyring those who denied his title. What was Nero's flame, or Torquemada's ax, or Bloody Mary's scaffold but pharisaic Cæsarism fighting for a form and a name and the selfish control these were supposed to confer? What a Gileadite readiness to slaughter all who cannot say "Shibboleth!"

Division on a mere name or form comes from the Pharisee and not from Jesus. Had forms or names been essential he would have supplied them. If there was anything fundamental in

the form of the eucharist or the form of baptism, he would have made it clear. But he who condemned the Pharisees for formalism was not likely to tie his imperial truth in peasant shackles. He was the foe of empty form. He was the most uncompromising foe of empty form the history of the world produces. He wanted men to love God and to be brethren one to another. He leaves to the sense, and to the temperament of the individual, and of the times, *how* they shall worship God and *how* men shall serve one another.

This is the *raison d'être* for his command to humility and to simplicity. Humility keeps the servant teachable, so that he may learn more to teach. Simplicity creates a hatred of caste-creating distinctions. It does away with order of precedence at feasts, and makes the soul approachable, understandable; it destroys mystery. Jesus was the champion of simplicity. His truth, like the mountain and the sea, awakens confidence because comprehensible. The child understood Him.

But could a child understand the Pharisee? Undoubtedly not. But he could baffle the Pharisee, as did the simple questions and answers of Mary's child in the temple. Mary's child asked for truth. The Pharisee offered him form, and was perplexed and confounded because his form could not frame the truth. I once stood on a height at Saranac viewing one of the most magnificent rainbows God ever painted on a

cloudy canvas, as it arched above the beautiful lake. I seized my camera. I must possess the rainbow. But, when developed, the picture showed a barely distinguishable curved line against a dark background. The beauty was wholly gone; all color, all proportion and vastness of the original scene was lost; only a hair-line, a mere circular form in a field of black. So against the world's ignorance and dark despair Jesus spreads the spiritual arch of a living hope, quivering with the sensitive colors of love, of joy, of peace, of gentleness, of goodness, of faith, and of self-control. A Pharisee seizes his camera, attempts to photograph the radiant light of the gospel, the eternal glory of Jesus Christ, and what does he get? A mere form, a hairline against a sea of black! In his own vast self-delusion, he becomes convinced that his little self-made form is a fitting representation of the beauty and vastness of the original. A child can see the Pharisee's blunder. But not he who would rather be called Rabbi than behold the Shekinah of God!

But are we much better? What folly has led us to formulate intellectual sophistries into dogmas, which we apologize for by asking men to "believe according to the measure of their understanding of them?" The Pharisees are not the world's only formalists. There have been times when Nicaea and Chalcedon and Westminster and Trent usurped the place of the personality, and exorcised the spirit of Jesus Christ. There

was a time when Hodge and Heaven were interchangeable equivalents. But all attempts to set limits to divinity are sure to be outgrown. When men can define life, or set bounds to light, or put a q. e. d. after spirit, they will frame a theology large enough to contain religion.

"Nothing is more simple than greatness; indeed, to be simple is to be great," said Emerson. And in his gospel's simplicity Jesus shuns the Rabbism of the scribe, and leaves a truth too great for names. Hence he says, "Be not ye called Rabbi. In the great school of my truth all learners are teachers, and all teachers are learners."

2. "One is your Master, even Christ." A suggestion to *obedience*. The second element in the spirit of a disciple is obedience, a *recognition of the supremacy of Jesus Christ*. "Be not ye called Masters, for one is your Master, even Christ." The disciple's danger is great when he arrogates to himself the functions which belong to his master; when he mistakes the keys of the kingdom for the kingdom itself.

"Be not ye called Master, for there is but one Master." Jesus Christ will not yield his supremacy to any man, or to any institution. The church which professes to possess it as a piece of merchandise finds the spirit fled, the empty shell alone remains. In our Christian faith there is but one master, one authority, one infallibility. It is not the church, or the priest, or the people, or the Bible, or the ordinance, or

the creed, or the deed. It is the *person* of Jesus Christ alone. He is the autocrat, the one authority, the untaught teacher of the taught. Because he is the express image of the Father, the elements of spiritual perfection personalized, he therefore is the sole master at whose feet his disciples must sit if they would truly see the face of God, and truly know the heart of God.

Yet he is a Cæsar without Cæsarism, an autocrat without autocracy. His kingdom is not a despotism. His claim to the obedience of his disciples rests in his perfections and in his services, rather than in his will. He *woos* us into obedience. He does not *will* us into obedience. He is our Master by his preëminence and by our election, not by statutory compulsion. We may reject or we may accept as we will. He does not force our wills. He never invades the personal rights of any man. He never asks men to surrender their wills, to call themselves creatures of the dust, or to abandon the control over their own destiny. Men must choose him, if they choose at all, because he is their best teacher, he is their wisest guide, he is their greatest lover, he is the highest form of our personal life. Let men follow him because He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. For these reasons alone does he claim men. He will not usurp, like a Cæsar, a man's control of himself.

He will not even assume control of a man who offers to resign his own will. He will not

allow any man to abdicate the throne of his own personality. Sometimes men may wish Jesus would. But he could not if he would. Not even the omnipotence of God Himself can save us the necessity of choosing for ourselves. It is our part in forming our characters. Light and darkness are before us, we must choose for ourselves. Love and hate are before us, we must choose for ourselves. Christ and anti-Christ are before us, we must choose for ourselves.

We cannot by any possibility even *defer* the choice. If we do not choose consciously we choose unconsciously. We cannot even choose at *once* and have done with it. No profession of a creed, or acceptance of a covenant, or confession before men, will finally settle the matter. Every day and every hour by conscious act, and even more by unconscious act, *are* we, *must* we, *do* we make choice between good and evil, Christ and anti-Christ. Sometimes it is one, sometimes the other, and character is both the cause and the effect of our various choosings. The path to character is hard, narrow, and the most difficult thing in the world of attainment.

O what strayings from the truth have been caused by our failure to understand Christ here! In an honest consecration we have tried to put on him the task we alone can perform. We have asked him to remove the temptation which will never be removed except by our persistent choice of the good. He has offered to teach,

but we have asked him to do the learning also. "We have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." So we have grown weary. Finding the perpetual effort to faith so burdensome, men have taken to forms. Forms are so much easier, and the task could be called done. So the church made merchandise of virtue. It offered character for the repetition of prayers, the doing of duties, the buying of indulgences. The church made a mechanism of faith, and sought to create *peace of heart* by a machine. For a while the self-deceived world thought itself content. They preferred the easily fulfilled dictum of the church to the proffered Master-ship of Christ. As Henry Drummond says, "It was a comfortable, credulous rest upon authority, not a hard earned, self-obtained personal possession. Truth never becomes truth till it is earned." Personal moral responsibility, personal momentary choice is the only path to the true peace of God. Man must choose for himself. Christ is not his master here. If he could, though he cannot, the choice would have no moral value for *us*. But He will not and cannot trespass and take from us the care of doing what we must do for ourselves.

In an infinitely *larger and truer* sense is Jesus Christ our Master. He masters us like the beauty of the flower, like the majesty of the mountain, or the infinitude of the stars. It is the sublimity of his truth, the sacrifice of his spirit, the charm and unselfish love of his per-

sonality which master us. A dull-brained woodsman may be utterly unmindful of the beauty of the flower; a closed eye be wholly unmoved by mountain and by star. To such they are as if they did not exist. So a sodden soul, steeped in self, will not be mastered by the utmost sacrifice and love of Jesus Christ. To such he is not Master. It is only as the man by perpetual resolution of his own nature holds himself in companionship with what he knows of Christ that he becomes mastered by Him. A man is mastered only by that to which he holds himself in subjection, through free acts of attention and of desire. What does not hold my attention or my desire cannot claim me. Whatsoever does, by those acts, possesses me. If my attention and my desire are claimed by lust, then lust works the coarsening of my nature as immutably as the force of gravitation. If the love of Christ claims our attention and our desire, then we are mastered by his spirit as surely as the glow of the morning absorbs the dark.

"One is your Master." The word *didaskalos*, from which "master" is translated, really signifies "teacher." But not teacher in any modern sense. Today the teacher may teach and neither the scholar, nor even the teacher himself, follow. A physician will not always take his own medicine, or the patient either. He may pour it down a knothole in his chamber floor, as did a Hingham boy, after the doctor had gone away. Yet still lived to hear his mother praise the medi-

cine, although she wondered what made the plaster yellow over the sitting room. But with the *ancients* a teacher not only taught, but he must also be an embodiment of his own teaching. A scholar not only learned, but he was expected to put into daily practice the principles of his teacher. The Talmud says, "If thy father and thy teacher are drowning, and thou canst save but one, then save thy *teacher*; for thy father hath begotten thy body only, but thy teacher hath begotten thy soul." Thus with the ancients the teacher became the master also, controlling not merely the thought, but through the thought laying claim upon the life. In this sense is Jesus *Teacher and Master*.

The cry of this generation has been "back to Jesus Christ" and "forward in Christ." There has been a growing sense that religion has sacrificed too much to theology. We are feeling that we have allowed forms and standards too largely to assume the place which belongs to personal fellowship with Jesus Christ and spiritual unity with one another. Our aim has been to eschatological. We have dreamed that the kingdom of Christ was a future kingdom, instead of a kingdom which was to come on earth, as well as in heaven. Men have raised such a cloud discussing the *divinity* of Christ that they have obscured their *duty* to Christ. We have allowed intellectual discussion to take the place of heart service. While fully recognizing, by ofttime bitter experience, the laws of the natural

world, it has taken us longer to learn that there are also laws in the spiritual world; laws just as expressive of the divine nature, just as immutable, just as inexorable in the realm of spirit as in the realm of matter. Indeed, we are learning that they are seemingly more inexorable, for it is not so hard for a man to perceive the need of prevision and provision against material necessities, as to be awake to the consequence to his soul of the apparently unimportant moral acts of his daily life. Just as the sun and the rain and the soil claim obedience from the plant as the condition of its material growth, so Jesus, as the representative and personalized form of spiritual law, claims obedience from us his disciples. Let us imagine that the plant had volition and wilfully withdrew from sun and rain and earth. We know it would do so to its own destruction. Even so the disciple who does not willingly yield himself to Christ. To withhold one's self is to harm one's self. To yield himself is for a man to find his unrealized divinity.

For any man to disregard the mastership of Christ is to cut off the living stream which irrigates the soil of his own soul. We understand this, therefore we regard our divisive "isms" less and less. Dr. Brand of Oberlin once said, in an address on the Creed and the Covenant, that "Our creeds express the theory, and our covenants the life of God's people." We are learning that as we penetrate deeper and deeper into the heart of Jesus we come nearer

to the life of God. In the words of Phillips Brooks, "as we dig down infinitely deep we all meet in the center." These mountain ranges and seas and deserts which divide us are superficial forms, rather than the real, living, elemental, warm heart of the matter.

Because Christ is our common Master, it grows less and less possible for churches to remain divided one from another. As we draw nearer his heart the formalism which has divided us, and made us seek each other's life, seems less and less important. A view from the mountain summit erases the man-made barriers of the valley, because it fuses small fields into vast unities, and pours dignity around the whole scene by revealing its larger prospects and greatnesses. So one broad soul view of Christ makes our little forms and isms vanish like a leaf caught in a tempest, or perish like the mud dam of a child before the flood of a heaving torrent which the mountain has caught fresh from the clouds.

3. And this suggests the final element in the spirit of a disciple. "And all ye are brethren." The assertion of *unity*. The deep reason for laying aside selfish individualism, and for becoming one in spirit and in truth lies not in any economic advantage, or administrative benefit, but in the supreme fact that we are brethren.

Yet this fact always has been and is doubted. It has been doubted both intellectually and practically. Intellectually, because men have set up

their private interpretations and standards, and have insisted that only those are brethren who accept such man-made distinctions. They have done this in spite of the express teaching of Jesus that the basis of that brotherhood is to be found in God's Fatherhood and in his common mastership, rather than in men's ordinances.

"All ye are brethren." The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the wise and the simple are made one by that annunciation. Not that the talents, or the tasks, or the fortunes of men can ever be made uniform, for these are accidental, rather than essential. The supreme fact remains that when the veneer of our caste and pride and material distinctions of place and power and wealth is rubbed away it discloses a common human fibre underneath. The only thing which separates the savage from the savant is the culture of heredity and environment. But many a savage is a better man and truer to the elemental spiritual principles than many a savant. We are all common clay at bottom. We regret to say that some of us are seemingly worse for generations of cultural advantage, as the culture of our talents has been used to sin more subtly and to rob others more legally. But in the main certainly our civilization has been an evolution. Yet we have not risen so high, or ever shall, that we can despise those lower than ourselves, or wisely fail to remember that we are brethren, since one God made us all, and one Christ is Master of us all. We should not forget the

common pit out of which we have been dug, or cease to remember that as our human nature approaches its diviner heights it recognizes this common fraternity, which makes mankind one. The common Fatherhood of God is the evidence of our common brotherhood. To deny man our brother is to deny God our Father. There is no respect of persons with Him.

What a heaven this earth would become were men to recognize and to govern their daily conduct by this principle! Would corporate wealth and trade unionism be at war with one another? Would such vast and cruel disproportions exist between the rewards of industry and talent?

Lyman Abbott has said, "Things are made for men, not men for things. The function of life is the development of manhood, and whenever society is so organized that it is destroying manhood that it may build up material things, it is organized in a pagan fashion, not a Christian fashion." The clash of labor and capital, where either is unjust, or of government with selfish monopoly, in every civilized land gives warning that if advancing intelligence cannot receive fraternal justice by the force of fraternity it will claim it by force of law. There is not a question about God's *providence*. There is enough gold in the earth and enough land on its surface to yield every industrious and capable man a living without slavery. To receive this every honest man will agree is only social justice. Men are learning to demand it, to plan it for each other,

and all intelligent captains of industry are already granting it; for they realize it is far better to be just than that injustice should lead hungry men into force, and thus steal from the affluent the fruits of their own hard-earned victories.

It is no idle word, it is no trifling platitude that men should heed the assertion of Jesus that "all ye are brethren." A wise adoption of this momentous truth will save the disruption of homes, the wreck of states, and that insane, fratricidal war which ruins nations. The Pharisees shut their ears against this fact, and slew its teacher on a cross. But in the granite hardness of their hearts, and in that of all their descendants they have paid, ten million times, the awful penalty. The soul which shuts itself up against men perishes in cold isolation. The life which gives itself to men in service and suffering becomes one in a joyous divine unity.

Memorable was the sight of the disbandment of the Union army in 1865. Past the reviewing stand of the President those war scarred vetrans marched. Ragged and haggard with the sufferings through which they had passed they filed endlessly on. They were only a part of the multitude of comrades who had fought by their side. In many a Southern grave those comrades lay sleeping on the field of their glory, having sealed their convictions with their blood, and having rejoined the broken fragments of their country by their death. And now, the war being over, the remnants of that broken host file past

their beloved president in a final review. Those who witnessed that scene, I am told, broke down at the unusual sight. In that moving procession could be seen the emaciated forms of those who had spent years in some horrible prison. Hobbling along with his comrades came many a brave veteran who had left a limb on some distant field. No wound which might disfigure the frame of man but might be seen in that war worn host; and upon the bodies of all appeared those marks of suffering in the world's greatest war for liberty, unity and fraternity. A million men by their servanthip and sacrifice atoned for the crime against human brotherhood, the Christ doctrine that all ye are brethren.

How suffering makes brothers of men all! The great city is filled with a jarring humanity, class against class, labor against capital, the morally corrupt in a death struggle against the morally true. Suddenly, as a thief in the night, that city is shaken from its foundations, and consumed in an indescribable holocaust of fire. Yet common disaster teaches them mutual servanthip and love; rich and poor, strong and weak, cultured and ignorant forget the clash of fratricidal strife and sit down in their great common suffering as brothers together. Reviving each other's hope they rise on the ashes of their desolation and, astonishing all men, with courageous and united hearts, rebuild so grandly as to exceed the seven wonders of the world.

Is not that the supreme lesson of Calvary?

The Godman suffers that men may find God, and also each other. His cross divinely declares that among Christians there is neither bond nor free; riches nor poverty; servant nor master, but all ye are brethren. The combinations of the world move on resistlessly to that final unity where all are one in Christ.

I' who sit in Cæsar's seat
Am God's child.
Yon peasant toiling at my feet
Is God's child.
In veins of crimson or of blue,
A common blood goes coursing through.
I serve him by heart and brain,
He serves me by heart and hand.
Hand brings me the golden grain
Brain gives him a peaceful land;
While heart to heart
Loves each other,
Brother serving brother,
Children we
Of one Divinity.

"Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." Herein is expressed that simplicity, obedience, and unity which are the true spirit of Christian discipleship: in our outward forms, simple; in our inner life, obedient to the person of Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Lover: in our attitude toward others, united and fraternal, sharing our sorrows and successes. Hereby shall we manifest Him in whom is Life, and whose life is the Light of the world.

Preached at Marietta, as retiring Moderator of Congregational Conference of Ohio, May 15, 1906.

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